What is claimed is:

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1. An active document encapsulating a transaction and the transaction's current status, comprising:

a first set of data fields, wherein the data fields represent attributes of a parent transaction and include a sub-identifier field; and

a first set of metadata, wherein the first set of metadata populates the first set of data fields and describes the attributes represented by the first set of data fields, the sub-identifier field including metadata from the first set of metadata that identifies a secondary transaction, linking data generated by the secondary transaction to the active document.

2. The active document of claim 1, further comprising a parent transaction resource comprising the first set of data fields and the first set of metadata.

3. The active document of claim 2, wherein the sub-identifier field links the parent transaction resource to a sub-transaction resource which comprises a second set of data fields that represent attributes of the secondary transaction and a second set of metadata that populates the second set of data fields and describes the attributes of the secondary transaction, whereby changes to the sub-transaction resource are reflected in the parent transaction resource.

4. The active document of claim 3, wherein the second set of metadata comprises transaction specific data that corresponds to at least one data field in the first set of data fields, whereby a change to the transaction specific data is made in the corresponding data field by populating the corresponding data field with the transaction specific data.

5. The active document of claim 1, wherein the first set of metadata is stored in a repository that is accessed by a core.

6. The active document of claim 5, wherein the core matches the sub-identifier field to the secondary transaction and updates the first set of data fields by populating at least one data field in the first set of data fields with the data generated by the secondary transaction.

7. The active document of claim 1, wherein th e active document is written in extensible markup language and is capable of being displayed by a web browser.

8. The active document of claim 1, wherein the data fields include a permissions fields which includes metadata that specifies who can access the active document.

9. The active document of claim 1, wherein the data fields include a second sub-identifier field that includes metadata that identifies a second secondary transaction, linking data generated by the second secondary transaction to the active document.

10. The active document of claim 1, wherein the parent transaction is a purchase order and the secondary transaction is a sales order.

11. A method for creating an active document that encapsulates a transaction and the transaction's current status, comprising the steps of:

creating a parent transaction resource, wherein the parent transaction resource represents a parent transaction and is linked to data generated by a secondary transaction, the creating a parent transaction resource step comprising the steps of:

generating a first set of data fields, wherein the first set of data fields represent attributes of the parent transaction and include a sub-identifier field; and

populating the first set of data fields with a first set of metadata, wherein the metadata describes the attributes represented by the data fields.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of:

creating a sub-transaction resource, wherein the sub-transaction resource represents the secondary transaction, the creating a sub-transaction resource step comprising the steps of:

generating a second set of data fields, wherein the second set of data fields represent attributes of the secondary transaction and include an identifier field; and

populating the second set of data fields with a second set of metadata, wherein the metadata describes the attributes represented by the data fields and includes transaction specific data that corresponds to at least one of the first set of data fields in the parent transaction resource.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:

linking the parent transaction resource and the secondary transaction resource so that changes made to the transaction specific data are made in the corresponding at least one of the first set of data fields in the parent transaction resource.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the linking step comprises the steps of:

populating the sub-identifier field with metadata that identifies the secondary transaction; and

populating the identifier field with metadata that identifies the parent transaction.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:

registering the parent transaction resource and the sub-transaction resource in a repository, whereby the first set of metadata and the second set of metadata may be accessed and updated.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein the creating step is conducted by submitting code written in a programming language that supports extensible markup language, the code comprising the first set of data fields and the first set of metadata.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the programming language is Java, C++, Perl or Python.

18. A method of viewing an active document that encapsulates a transaction and the transaction's current status, comprising the steps of:

accessing a parent transaction resource, wherein the parent transaction resource comprises data fields that represent attributes of a parent transaction and metadata that populates the data fields and the parent transaction resource is linked to a secondary transaction resource that comprises transaction specific data;

updating the parent transaction resource with the transaction specific data from the secondary transaction resource, wherein any changes to the transaction specific data are made to the data fields in the parent transaction resource; and

presenting the updated parent transaction resource to a user.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the accessing step comprises the following steps:

sending a request for the parent transaction resource from a client to a core;

determining if the client is permitted to access the parent transaction resource; and

forwarding the request to a resource handler for the parent transaction resource, wherein the resource handler physically accesses the parent transaction resource.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the displaying step comprises the steps of:

sending the updated transaction to the client; and

displaying the updated transaction using a web browser, whereby the metadata may be viewed.